

Message Text

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43

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 NEA-09 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 IO-10 SAM-01 SAB-01 AID-05 /081 W

----- 004234

R 230850Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7731

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMCONSUL MEDAN

AMCONSUL SURABAYA

C O N F I D E N T I A L JAKARTA 4808

E.O. 111652: GDS

TAGS: PINT ID

SUBJ: INDONESIA'S MOSLEMS--FRUSTRATIONS OF A NOMINAL MAJORITY

SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION: THIS MESSAGE FORWARDS SUMMARY OF EMBASSY ANALYSIS OF CURRENT SITUATION AND PROSPECTS FOR INDONESIA'S MOSLEM COMMUNITY, WHICH REMAINS SIGNIFICANT ELEMENT IN INDONESIAN POLITICAL CONSTELLATION AND IS OFTEN CONSIDERED BY MILITARY AS PRINCIPAL POTENTIAL OPPOSITION. MOSLEMS HAVE OVER PAST YEAR-PLUS EXHIBITED NEW ENERGY AND HAVE MOBILIZED PRESSURE ON GOI OVER VARIETY OF ISSUES. ALTHOUGH MOSLEMS NOT LIKELY IN NEAR FUTURE TO BE ABLE MOUNT SUCCESSFUL OVERALL CHALLENGE TO SUHARTO REGIME BARRING MAJOR SHIFTS IN INTERNAL OR INTERNATIONAL SITUATION, MOSLEM PRESSURES LIKELY TO CONTINUE TO FORCE GOI TO BEND FROM TIME TO TIME ON SPECIFIC ISSUES, AND MOSLEM DISAFFECTION CONSTITUTES LONG-TERM POLITICAL LIABILITY FOR GOI. MOSLEM RESENTMENT AGAINST CHRISTIAN GAINS CAN INVOLVE US MISSION-
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ARIES. FULL TEXT OF REPORT BEING FORWARDED BY AIRGRAM.

END SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION

1. OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF INDONESIAN POPULATION IS NOMINALLY MOSLEM. AS SOCIAL AND POLITICAL FORCE, HOWEVER, DEVOUT MOSLEMS ARE NUMERICAL MINORITY, AND COMBINATION OF INTERNAL DIVISIONS IN MOSLEM COMMUNITY AND LONG-STANDING HOSTILITY OF INDONESIAN MILITARY AND SECULAR LEADERSHIP HAS GENERALLY ACCORDED MOSLEMS SECONDARY POLITICAL ROLE. FOLLOWING BRIEF HONEYMOON OF ARMY-MOSLEM COOPERATION IN PURGING INDONESIAN COMMUNISTS AFTER ABORTIVE 1965 COUP ATTEMPT, ARMY-DOMINATED GOI MOVED TO REORDER INDONESIAN POLITICAL STRUCTURE AND DRASTICALLY REDUCED POWER OF TRADITIONAL POLITICAL GROUPS INCLUDING MOSLEMS, WITH RESULTING INCREASE IN MOSLEM RESENTMENT TOWARDS GOVERNMENT. SIMULTANEOUS DEVELOPMENTS ON RELIGIOUS SCENE--IMPORTANTLY INCLUDING CHRISTIAN GAINS IN SOME MOSLEM-CONTROLLED AREAS--APPEAR TO MANY MOSLEMS TO THREATEN THEIR RELIGIOUS POSITION AS WELL.

2. SERIES OF EVENTS STARTING LATE 1973 PROVIDED MOSLEM LEADERSHIP WITH NEW RALLYING POINTS FOR MOBILIZATION OF MOSLEM COMMUNITY AND EXPRESSION OF GENERAL FRUSTRATION WITH POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS TRENDS. GOVERNMENT ATTEMPT IN LATE 1973 TO PASS SECULAR LAW GOVERNING MARRIAGE WAS IDEAL RELIGIOUS/POLITICAL VEHICLE, AND MOMENTUM GENERATED IN SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGN OPPOSING THIS DRAFT LAW WAS MAINTAINED IN 1974 THROUGH CAMPAIGN (ALSO ULTIMATELY SUCCESSFUL) OPPOSING PLANS TO HOLD WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES CONFERENCE IN JAKARTA. RENEWAL OF MOSLEM-CHRISTIAN TENSIONS IN SAME PERIOD UNDERLINED CONTINUING DANGER OF RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE INCLUDING POSSIBILITY OF DIRECT CONFRONTATIONS BETWEEN MOSLEMS AND FOREIGN (INCLUDING US) MISSIONARIES. SIMULTANEOUSLY DEVELOPMENTS IN MIDDLE EAST AND DRAMATIC INCREASE IN WORLD POWER OF MOSLEM ARAB STATES FURTHER BOOSTED LOCAL MOSLEM ELAN AND PROVIDED SERIES OF ISSUES ON WHICH MOSLEMS PRESSED GOI FOR GREATER ATTENTION TO WORLD ISLAMIC CAUSES. MOSLEM FIRMLINESS IN CURRENT PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE OVER NEW POLITICAL PARTIES BILL INDICATES NEW MOMENTUM LIKELY TO BE MAINTAINED.

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3. GOI RESPONSE TO MOSLEM ACTIVISM HAS BEEN COMBINATION OF CONCESSIONS (PARTICULARLY OVER RELIGIOUS ISSUES), PRAGMATIC EFFORTS TO WIN RANK AND FILE MOSLEMS TO GOVERNMENT'S DEVELOPMENT THEOLOGY, AND EVER-PRESENT THREAT TO USE MAILED FIST TO COUNTER OVERLY RAMBUNCTIOUS ISLAMIC AGITATION. SIMULTANEOUSLY, GOI HAS MAINTAINED EXCLUSION OF MOST RESPECTED MOSLEM LEADERS FROM GOVERNMENT COUNCILS--

AND FROM OFFICIAL LEADERSHIP POSITIONS IN MOSLEM POLITICAL PARTIES--AND CONTINUED LONG-TERM EFFORTS TO WEAKEN MOSLEM POLITICAL BASE.

4. NEAR-TERM OUTLOOK IS FOR MORE OF THE SAME, WITH MOSLEM LEADERS ALERT FOR FURTHER OPPORTUNITIES TO VENT THEIR FRUSTRATIONS AND DISPLAY THEIR POWER TO MOBILIZE THEIR CONSTITUENCY, AND WITH GOI WORKING TO DENY THEM SUCH OPPORTUNITIES WHERE POSSIBLE AND CONTAIN THEM WHEN ISSUES ARISE. PERIOD LEADING TO NATIONAL ELECTIONS IN 1977 PARTICULARLY CRUCIAL IN THIS REGARD FROM GOI POINT OF VIEW, WITH ALL EFFORTS GEARED TO PREVENTING INSTABILITY AND ENSURING IMPRESSIVE GOVERNMENT VICTORY.

5. DESPITE BASIC MOSLEM RESENTMENTS AND NEW SIGNS OF ACTIVISM, EMBASSY CONSIDERS IT IS EXTREMELY UNLIKELY THAT MOSLEMS COULD SURMOUNT INTERNAL DISUNITY AND OTHER INHERENT WEAKNESSES (INCLUDING VIRTUALLY TOTAL LACK OF SUPPORT WITHIN ARMED FORCES) TO MOUNT SUCCESSFUL OVERALL CHALLENGE TO GOI DURING PRE-ELECTION PERIOD, AND THERE NO CURRENT INDICATIONS FROM ANY SOURCES THAT SUCH AN EFFORT BEING ACTIVELY CONTEMPLATED. NEVERTHELESS, MOSLEMS MAY WELL INDUCE GOI TO MAKE ADDITIONAL CONCESSIONS--SUCH AS OVER PARTIES BILL OR FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES--FROM TIME TO TIME, TAKING ADVANTAGE OF GOVERNMENT'S OVERRIDING CONCERN WITH MAINTENANCE OF SURFACE STABILITY IN SO DOING.

6. OVER LONG RUN, IT REMAINS UNCERTAIN THAT SUHARTO GOVERNMENT WILL WIN ITS OBVIOUS GAMBLE THAT COMBINATION OF BACK-STAGE MANIPULATIONS AND TIMELY CONCESSIONS CAN KEEP MOSLEM GENIE (AMONG OTHERS) IN BOTTLE WHILE RESTRUCTURING OF INDONESIAN ECONOMY AND POLITICS PRODUCES NEW GENERATION OF NON-IDEOLOGICAL INDONESIANS WITH OVERRIDING

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COMMITMENT TO NEW ORDER. MORE LIKELY RESULT OF ESSENTIALLY HEAVY-HANDED AND EXCLUSIVE GOI APPROACH TOWARD MOSLEMS (AS TOWARD STUDENTS, INTELLECTUALS, AND OTHERS) IS PERPETUATION OF PRESENT STANDOFF, WITH DISAFFECTED GROUPS CONSTITUTING CONTINUING POLITICAL LIABILITY TO ARMY-DOMINATED REGIME.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MOSLEMS, POLITICAL SITUATION, NEGOTIATIONS, CHURCH STATE RELATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 APR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975JAKART04808
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750142-0591
From: JAKARTA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750425/aaaaaxiy.tel
Line Count: 161
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 14 JUL 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <14 JUL 2003 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <15 JUL 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: INDONESIA'S MOSLEMS--FRUSTRATIONS OF A NOMINAL MAJORITY SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION: THIS MESSAGE FORWARDS SUMMARY OF
TAGS: PINT, ID
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006